



Winter Wellness



**In the depths of winter,
I finally learned that
there was in me an
invincible summer.**

-Albert Camus

The dark time of the year brings with it colder days and even colder nights, as well as traditions in many cultures that involve festivals of lights, family and community gatherings, and shared meals.

A desire to fill up with carbohydrates and spend extra time sleeping in a warm bed may have been useful in ancient times where winter meant limited food, sun, and heat. Today, with supermarkets, artificial lights, and central heating, the wish to hibernate seems out of place and can create difficulties with productivity and weight gain.

Staying well in the winter, for many people, requires extra attention. This booklet will help you think about your own winter wellness and offers tips for getting and staying well throughout the winter months.

Eight Dimensions

Wellness means living a balanced life with a sense of purpose. Balance means attending to all of the eight dimensions of wellness: Physical, Emotional, Intellectual, Social, Spiritual, Environmental, Occupational, and Financial. Within each dimension, you probably have strengths and challenges that are especially relevant to winter wellness.

Winter is the time for comfort, for good food and warmth, for the touch of a friendly hand and a talk beside the fire.

-Edith Sitwell



Emotional Wellness

Many people have mood changes in the winter months. This can be due to lack of light and fresh air, family difficulties (current and past), a history of trauma, memories of loss, or some other cause. Sadness and a lack of motivation make it hard to accomplish anything, adding a sense of worthlessness. Winter also brings a chance to reflect, to remember, and to plan.

If we had no winter, the spring
would not be so pleasant; if we
did not sometimes taste of
adversity, prosperity would not
be so welcome.

-Anne Bradstreet

Recognize what you do to be emotionally well and consider these activities that others have found helpful:

1. Keep a journal tracking your thoughts and feelings
2. Express your gratitude, even for the smallest good things
3. Watch a funny movie
4. Sing along with the radio, your mp3 player, or Pandora® online radio
5. Dance—either all by yourself or with someone else
6. Do something that you find a little challenging to build your willpower
7. Tell a joke or a funny story
8. Indulge yourself—get a sad book or movie for a good cry
9. Do something kind for another person
10. Cuddle with a person, a pet, or a soft blanket or pillow

Environmental Wellness

Often winter weather mean staying indoors, and “cabin fever” is a common problem. If your indoor space does not comfort and renew you, feeling trapped inside adds to the misery. For people who find comfort in nature and sunlight, winter can be limiting. Ice and snow can create transportation problems and make walking dangerous. Winter also brings a chance to recreate your indoor space and find new ways to enjoy the outdoors.

Whoever breasted a snowstorm without being excited and exhilarated? It is like being pelted with sparks from a battery.

-John Burroughs

Think about what you do to focus on your environmental wellness and consider these activities that others have found helpful:

1. Clean your living space
2. Purge your closet and other belongings
3. Put something beautiful in every room
4. Go somewhere that has lots of windows and bright natural light
5. Light candles, keeping safety in mind
6. Force a few bulbs to have crocus or daffodils bloom indoors
7. Try a new winter sport, like snowshoeing
8. Get boot grippers for walking safely, like YakTrax®
9. Go outside in the sun in the early morning hours
10. Get library books about gardens or sunny island beaches



Financial Wellness

Winter holidays often mean added expenses. Heating costs and electricity bills may go up in the winter, creating financial strain. Feeling sad sometimes contributes to impulse spending and buying things you don't need.

The end of the calendar year is a good time to review your current spending and plan for the next year. Developing the habit of tracking what you spend gives you the information you need to set up a budget. Appreciate what you already do for your financial wellness.

A penny saved is a penny earned.

-Benjamin Franklin

These tips, added to what you already do, can help you save a little here and there:

1. Implement a savings plan, even if it's only loose change in a jar
2. Budget carefully for gifts; start saving early in the year
3. Have a pot luck party at home instead of eating out with friends
4. Make gifts—a poem, baked goods, or a photograph
5. Wrap gifts in the Sunday comics and reuse gift bags
6. Buy foods in season (like winter squash, grapefruits, and oranges)
7. Watch for holiday sales and compare prices to find the best bargain
8. Pack your own lunch instead of buying
9. Check out consignment shops for gift bargains and winter clothes
10. Wear a sweater and lower the thermostat to save on heating bills

Occupational Wellness

For people who have a job, adding holiday events and responsibilities can be overwhelming. For people who are not employed, winter can contribute to isolation and to feeling aimless.

Occupational wellness isn't only about paid work, but includes having regular meaningful activities that give a rhythm to the week. Praise yourself for the things you do that keep you active and interested in life.

Winter is a time of promise because there is so little to do— or because you can now and then permit yourself the luxury of thinking so.

-Stanley Crawford

Winter presents extra opportunities as well as challenges, as described in these tips:

1. Volunteer—even if only for a few hours
2. Offer help to a neighbor who is restricted by the weather
3. Express gratitude to your co-workers
4. Engage in creative activities
5. Learn about clubs and hobby groups in your local community
6. Create a rhythm and structure for your days and weeks
7. Plan your work time to take the best advantage of your energy
8. Holiday parties with co-workers can be fun, but stay professional
9. If your office lacks windows, try getting outside at break times
10. Wellness in other areas will boost your ability to do good work

Intellectual Wellness

Winter sluggishness can affect your mind as well as your body. Sadness can affect concentration and lack of motivation can get in the way of starting or finishing a project. In the cold weather, with the short days, you might find yourself spending more time in front of the TV, willing to watch anything that's on.

Keeping mentally sharp can be a challenge in the winter, but is as important then as it is the rest of the year, so continue what you're already doing for your intellectual wellness.

Let us love winter, for it is the
spring of genius.

-Pietro Aretino

Use the long evenings to challenge yourself, using some of these tips:

1. Access your local library
2. Discover podcasts, like www.freelibrary.org
3. Watch thought-provoking videos, like TED talks online
4. Check out TV programs that teach, not just entertain you
5. Read
6. Join a book club
7. Start a “one book” project with friends or coworkers
8. Try a new type of puzzle or try some online “brain games” (visit aarp.org for examples)
9. Get curious— find out “why” or “how”
10. Learn a new craft



Spiritual Wellness



While religion and faith are important for many people, others find different ways to renew and refresh their spirit, such as through nature or meditation. Holiday activities, events, displays, and customs may be at odds with your own beliefs and values, creating discomfort or annoyance. Finding meaning in life, seeking moments of peace, and discovering a sense of personal purpose are important at all times of year.

In winter, the stars seem to have rekindled their fires, the moon achieves a fuller triumph, and the heavens wear a look of exalted simplicity.

-John Burroughs

Maintain the spiritual practices that support you, especially those related to winter observances. These tips can help:

1. Explore your own values and beliefs
2. Read inspirational literature on how others found their purpose
3. Talk to your friends and family about what you value
4. Write your own motto for life
5. Learn about mindfulness and try to practice it daily
6. Find your own way to meditate or pray
7. Lose yourself in a chorale group or musical performance
8. Start a “wish jar” where you “deposit” your written hopes and dreams
9. Give back to your community, even if only in a small way
10. Connect with others who share your spiritual perspective

Social Wellness

Because winter can be isolating, many people have to put in extra effort to maintain connected with others at this time of year.

Holiday events and gatherings provide opportunities to socialize, but some of these get-togethers can be overwhelming or triggering, causing anxiety or stress rather than pleasure. By paying attention to what works for you, what stresses you, and what you are missing in your life, you can enrich your social wellness.

One kind word can warm three winter months.

-Japanese proverb

Stay connected with your existing supports,
and consider these tips:

1. Schedule special time with friends
2. Use the phone, email, and social media to stay connected
3. Turn down invitations that may create difficulties for you
4. Send a letter to someone you care about
5. Negotiate holiday traditions that don't work for you
6. Tell others what kind of connection you need and want
7. Go somewhere to be around people, even if you don't know them
8. Recognize that work or volunteering create social opportunities
9. Call a warm line, if you just need to talk
10. Say something nice to strangers, then appreciate their smiles



Physical Wellness

Often, the habits and routines that keep us physically well tend to fall off in the winter. Holiday schedules, difficulties with getting around, and cold weather make it hard to exercise regularly. Too much to eat and drink make it hard to stick to a healthy diet. Preparing for the holidays, adjusting to the short days, and unhealthy indulging can make it hard to get a good night's sleep every night. Winter colds can add to these difficulties and can create problems for wellness in many dimensions.



Every mile is two in winter.

-George Herbert

Use the dawn of the new year to set goals for your physical wellness, keeping these tips in mind:

1. Set action “do” goals, like exercising, instead of “passive” goals, like losing weight or inches
2. Keep your goals short-term and do-able
3. Watch portion sizes—take just a little of what you want
4. Keep moving!
5. Floss and brush at least twice a day, or more often if you indulge in sweets
6. Wear sunscreen, as reflection from snow can cause sunburn
7. Drink extra water to compensate for the dry air indoors and out
8. Use creams to keep your skin healthy (lotions can be drying)
9. Get your flu shot early
10. Contribute healthy foods to holiday gatherings

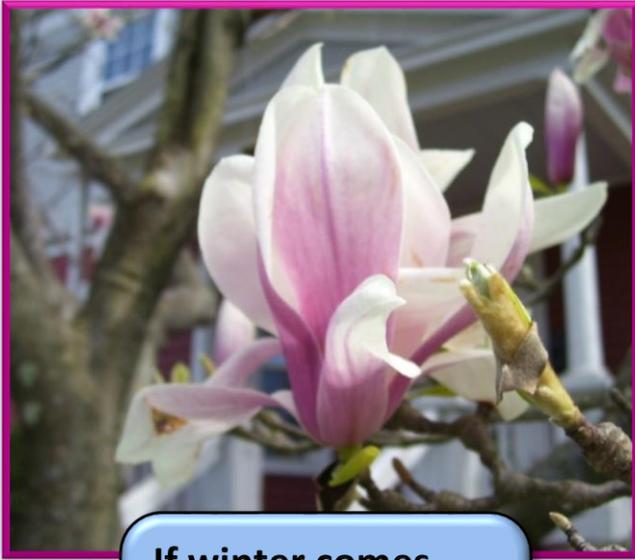
Sometimes our fate resembles a fruit tree in winter. Who would think that those branches would turn green again and blossom, but we hope it, we know it.

-Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Because the eight dimensions overlap, wellness in one area can boost wellness in others.



Celebrate when you do something for yourself. Small actions and small changes are victories nonetheless. Joy on one day this winter will plant the seeds for joy in winters ahead.



**If winter comes,
can spring be far
behind?**

-Percy Bysshe Shelley



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